

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

## INFORMATION REPORT

This Document contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States, within the meaning of Title 18, Sections 793 and 794, of the U.S. Code, as amended. Its transmission or revelation of its contents to or receipt by an unauthorized person is prohibited by law. The reproduction of this form is prohibited.

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

COUNTRY	USSR (Taymyr NO)	REPORT	
SUBJECT	Living Conditions on Ostrov Komsomolets (Severnaya Zemlya)	DATE DISTR.	MAY 21 1955 25X1
		NO. OF PAGES	3
DATE OF INFO.		REQUIREMENT NO.	RD 25X1
PLACE ACQUIRED		REFERENCES	

This is UNEVALUATED Information

THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.  
THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.  
(FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

1. Ostrov Komsomolets (N 80-30, E 95-00), Taymyr, NO was inhabited only by prisoners serving terms of not less than 25 years. [redacted] forced labor camps were established on the island only after discovery of uranium deposits during WW II. The whole island is practically covered by a glacier with only a narrow strip along the coast a few kilometers wide suitable for camp purposes. 25X1
2. [redacted] there were eight to ten camps on the island with a total prisoner population of 2,000 to 2,500. [redacted] many of the prisoners were Siberians who were arrested and brought to the island because they knew how to endure the severe cold and could help non-Siberians to stay alive. 25X1
3. Soviets had originally planned to keep prisoners on the island until each had completed his term. In most cases, however, the men were removed before their time was up, because they had suffered complete physical breakdowns. [redacted] no [redacted] man could stand the island for more than five years. 25X1
4. The camp was under the control of MVD officers who were assigned to the island as a disciplinary measure. They were responsible for work assignments, food supply, and the radio stations. 25X1
5. Prisoners lived in plywood shelters or canvas tents. No permanent quarters were available. Each plywood shelter accommodated 12 to 15 persons. The colony lived on a day-to-day basis, with no large storage of food supplies and with meals prepared in a central kitchen tent. Food consisted mostly of cereals, dried fruit, and canned food and was delivered by planes which carried away uranium ore. Meals varied little throughout the year and consisted mostly of millet, oats, and cabbage gruel with small amounts of canned meat. There was no bread or potatoes. Fat was issued on extremely cold days. 25X1

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

STATE	X	ARMY	X	NAVY	#X	AIR	X	FBI		AEC						
-------	---	------	---	------	----	-----	---	-----	--	-----	--	--	--	--	--	--

25X1

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

25X1

-2-

6. The poor diet and the hostile climate brought on all kinds of infirmities. Most prisoners lost all their teeth within a few years. Scurvy, circulatory ailments, heart trouble, and asthma were common. Water for drinking and washing had to be obtained by melting ice and snow. Lack of water caused uncleanliness, and many prisoners developed skin diseases.
7. Oil was the only fuel available. Prisoners, however, were issued adequate clothing, consisting of quilted jackets, wooden boots, and fur caps. During the winter period, face masks of fur had to be worn most of the time. In the short summer months, the quilted suits were exchanged for denim overalls.
8. No recreational facilities were provided at the camp. With no newspapers or radios, the only contact available to prisoners with the outside world was the MVD radio station which was a part of each camp. Most of the prisoners were dull and showed no initiative in cultural matters.
9. Except for gray mossy plants and a hardy grassy growth which appeared during the summer months, there was no vegetation worthy of the name on the island.
10. No domestic animals were maintained by the camps because of the difficulties of providing fodder. [redacted] no wild animals. Gnats and some birds appeared during the summer. The birds included polar ducks, wild geese, seagulls, and ptarmigans. The birds did not appear to nest on the island. No ducks and geese were observed after early August. Ptarmigans remained until late September. The seagulls were grayish-dark and were larger than those commonly seen in Europe. The gulls were seen singly or in flights of four or five. Except for an occasional bird shot by MVD officers, no attempt was made to improve diets by organizing shooting or snaring parties. 25X1
11. Winter lasted from early September to mid May. The lowest temperatures occurred during December and January. A thick sheet of snow covered the island during the winter months. The atmosphere was never calm but, particularly during the winter, gales of great force, frequently reaching hurricane force, swept the island. Whirlwinds chasing heavy masses of snow were frequent. It was impossible to stay out of doors without face masks, or to move on the surface without the aid of grab ropes. Severe blizzards occurred in March. During the entire winter, the humidity was low, and the skies overcast.
12. There was no transition period between winter and summer. [redacted] 25X1  
[redacted] 25X1  
[redacted] 25X1  
Permanent darkness lasted from October to early March; decreasing dusk, from March to June, permanent daylight, from June to August; and increasing dusk from August to October.
13. June, July, and August were the so-called summer months. During these months, the surface snow on the narrow coastal strip melted away, exposing grayish brown rocky earth. The ground thawed to a maximum depth of ten cm. During each day when the sun was low on the horizon, temperature dropped below freezing. No melting of the glaciers occurred nor did the off-shore ice break up, but remained thick enough to support an airport serving four-engine planes. The few clear sunny days during the year occurred during this period. The humidity was higher than usual in winter.
14. Precipitation on the island was generally in the form of snow, but during the summer months a fine drizzly rain fell, often mixed with snow. In the summer, fog occurred in the morning hours. It came in from the southwesterly direction and was dissipated in one or two hours.
15. [redacted] 25X1  
[redacted] 25X1  
In June through August, the permanent daylight period, the temperature ranged from 27 deg.C during the nominal daylight hours to -15 deg.C during the nominal night hours. In October through March, temperatures varied between -30 to -40 deg.C. The lowest temperature recorded was -56 deg.C in December, 1948.


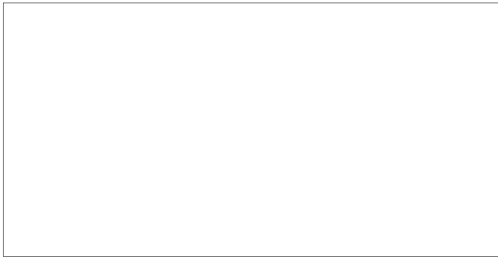
C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L



25X1

-3-

16.  ice breakers could not approach the island because of the thickness of the ice. The only tie with the mainland was provided by the airline from Murmansk via Novaya Zemlya. No planes other than those serving the island were seen. 25X1
17. Mining operations were occasionally hindered during the summer months when water from thawing snow found its way into the mines. These occurrences, however, did not interrupt operations. Because of the frozen ground, it was not necessary to prop galleries lying less than ten meters below the surface. Motor generators provided electric power. 25X1
- 

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L